



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

**75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901**

MAY 10 2011

Scott Armentrout
Forest Supervisor
Sierra National Forest
1600 Tollhouse Road
Clovis, CA 93611

**Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement for Kings River Experimental
Watershed Forest Health and Research Project, Sierra National Forest,
Fresno County, CA (CEQ# 20110119)**

Dear Mr. Armentrout:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the above-referenced project. Our review and comments are pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Kings River Experimental Watershed Project and provided comments to the Forest Service on February 7, 2011. We rated the DEIS as Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information (EC-2) due to our concerns regarding the potential impacts to air quality and commitments to mitigation measures to minimize those impacts. We advised that additional information was needed to fully describe climate change monitoring and how aspects of the research project can be incorporated into the goals of successful restoration.

EPA appreciates the Forest Service's responses to our comments on the DEIS. The Air Quality Analysis of the FEIS clarifies the information that was provided in the DEIS regarding prescribed burning. The Forest Service notes that impacts to public health will be minimized as much as possible due to design criteria and the guidelines and procedures in a Smoke Management Summary and Prescribed Fire Burn Plan. EPA would also like to thank the Forest Service for providing site-specific information related to climate change trends, including data collected and analyzed from weather stations within the area. We encourage such discussion in NEPA documents because it contributes to improved public understanding of the effects of climate change on forest ecosystems and forest management.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. Should you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or contact Stephanie

Skophammer, the lead reviewer for the project. Stephanie can be reached at (415) 972-3098 or skophammer.stephanie@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen M. Goforth", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

cc: Judi Tapia, Environmental Coordinator, Sierra National Forest